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Allen's legislation lifting ban on scholarships for religious studies majors passed by Senate

Lansing – A package of bills removing the prohibition against students of theology, divinity and religious education majors from receiving grants or scholarships from the state of Michigan passed the Senate today, Sen. Jason Allen (R- Traverse City) announced.

Allen introduced the seven-bill, bi-partisan sponsored, package earlier this year to end the practice of discrimination against certain types of academic study.

“Every college student in Michigan has a right to educational freedom,” Allen said. “We have a responsibility to make sure all students have the same opportunities and are not penalized for their academic interests or choice of studies.”

Teresa Becker, one of Allen's constituents, is a student who does not have equal access to the more than \$242 million awarded yearly to students in grants and scholarships because she chose to study theology.

Becker filed a lawsuit against the state last year when they rescinded her scholarship based on her major of study. Federal District Judge George Caram Steeh ruled the state is prohibited from enforcing the statute preventing her from receiving scholarship money.

Allen's legislation would affect five main programs: The Michigan Legislative Award, the Michigan Educational Opportunity Grant, the Michigan Competitive Scholarship, the Part-time Independent Student Grant, and the state's Tuition Grant programs.

(More)

Allen said changing the law also would help the state avoid potential law suits in the future, as the current language can be deemed a violation of Article I, Sec. 4 of the State Constitution.

“This is not an issue of the separation of church-state,” Allen said. “College students across Michigan should all have equal access to scholarships and not be denied from receiving them based simply on their choice of an academic major.”

Senate Bills 625-629, and 661 and 662 all passed with a bi-partisan vote and now go to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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